

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 BIB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 DHA-02 PM-04
NSC-05 SS-15 MED-02 TRSE-00 /059 W
-----212017Z 026266 /47
R 211525Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5321

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3730

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR, US
SUBJECT: VOA BROADCASTS TO THE USSR

REF: (A) STATE 061257, (B) MOSCOW 2946, (C) MOSCOW 2808

1. EMBASSY PLEASED TO HEAR THAT VOA RUSSIAN SERVICE BROADCASTS ARE UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY, TO ENSURE BALANCED TREATMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER SENSITIVE STORIES AND TO MAINTAIN ADHERENCE TO ESTABLISHED GUIDELINES.

2. EMBASSY FULLY AWARE THAT COVERAGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS STORIES MUST THESE DAYS TAKE GREATER PLACE IN VOA COVERAGE OF US NEWS AND PLAYBACK OF US MEDIA COMMENTARY AND PUBLIC OPINION ATTITUDES.

3. IT IS PARTICULARLY BECAUSE SO MUCH ATTENTION MUST BE PAID TO STORIES WHICH REQUIRE MOST SENSITIVE AND BALANCED TREATMENT THAT WE HAVE CALLED GENERALLY TO DEPARTMENT'S AND USIA'S NOTICE OUR CONCLUSION THAT PROPORTIONS AND PERSPECTIVE WERE OCCASIONALLY LOST IN PAST FEW WEEKS.

4. FULLER DISCUSSION WILL BE CONTAINED IN EMBASSY'S MONTHLY MONITORING REPORT, NOW UNDER PREPARATION. AT THIS JUNCTURE, WE WOULD MENTION THE RATHER LENGTHY, UNBROKEN
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DIRECT VOCING OF MUKOVSKY'S SPEECHES AT TWO DIFFERENT MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON (20 MINUTES ON MARCH 2 AND 8 MINUTES ON MARCH 3). THE VOA' BROADCASTS DETRACTED NOTABLY FROM EFFORTS TO BALANCE THE IMPACT OF BUKOVSKY'S VISIT WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE VICE PRESIDENT. ADDITIONALLY, THE VOA'S COVERAGE OF THE RECENT MOSCOW VISIT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S MEDICAL TEAM (REF B AND C) MISCONSTRUED

ITS PURPOSE AND, BY PLAYING IT AS A MAJOR NEWS STORY MIGHT HAVE JEOPARDIZED THE SUCCESS OF ITS MISSION. THE EMBASSY HAS NOTICED THAT THE RUSSIAN SERVICE NOW CARRIES VARIOUS EAST EUROPEAN AND SOVIET DISSIDENT STORIES AS BRIEFER ITEMS THAN IN RECENT PAST, AND NOT ALWAYS AT TOP OF THE NEWS -- WITHOUT, IN OUR VIEW, LESSENING THE IMPACT ON OUR AUDIENCES OF THESE IMPORTANT STORIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE SENSE A NEW CONCENTRATION ON PLAYBACK OF SOVIET MEDIA PLAY CONDEMNING US POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING ITEMS CRITICAL OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE PRESIDENT. WE DO NOT FEEL THE VOA SHOULD INADVERTENTLY CONTRIBUTE TO SHARPENING FOR ITS SOVIET LISTENERS AN IMPLICIT SOVIET THREAT TO TURN THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS INTO A MAJOR POLEMICAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE US AND THE USSR.

5. THE VOA'S RUSSIAN SERVICE REMAINS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT MEANS OF REACHING MILLIONS OF SOVIET CITIZENS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE USA AND ABOUT ITS GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES. A VARIETY OF AUDIENCES HAS BEEN LISTENING TO ITS PROGRAMS WITH ATTENTION AND WELL-JUSTIFIED RESPECT. IT IS OUR CONTENTION THAT SCRUPULOUS ATTENTION TO THE LONG-ESTABLISHED GUIDELINES AND BALANCES WHICH HAVE DISTINGUISHED THE VOA'S COVERAGE OF ESPECIALLY SENSITIVE QUESTIONS IS ALL THE MORE NECESSARY AS BOTH COUNTRIES EXPRESS THEMSELVES MORE FREELY ON ISSUES ON WHICH DIFFERING VIEWS ARE PASSIONATELY HELD.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, RADIO BROADCASTING
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MOSCOW03730
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770096-0942
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770339/aaaabhut.tel
Line Count: 88
Litigation Code IDs:
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Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 61257, 77 MOSCOW 2946, 77 MOSCOW 2808
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3047006
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VOA BROADCASTS TO THE USSR
TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, VOA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fdacd4b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009